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HISTORY.

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THE  
H I S T O R Y  
OF THE MAN  
AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

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*Omnia probate, Bonum tenete.*

S. P.

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L O N D O N:

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## P R E F A C E.

SOME reverend panegyrist\* on our late king, have, a little unfortunately, been fond of comparing him with a monarch in no respect resembling him; except in the length of his reign, *thirty and three years*; which a lucky text informed them to be the duration of David's sovereignty over the Hebrew nation. Had our good old king died a year sooner, or had we

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\* Dr. Chandler, Mr. Palmer, and others.

been indulged with him a year longer; they would then have lost the opportunity of applying this text; and in either case we might not have heard of the parallel.

A reverence for the memory of our late worthy prince, has occasioned the world being troubled with a new history of king David; which might otherwise not have appeared: meerly to shew how the memory of the British monarch is insulted by the comparison. Comparisons are frequently said to be odious: but no one was ever more so, than in this present instance.

The

# P R E F A C E.

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The accepted character of David king of Israel, is—*the man after God's own heart*;—which is the height of purity by supposition: and this we presume to be the reason why a similitude was endeavoured to be traced between their characters; in order to derive a glory from David, to a king, who has no need of having the Jewish chronicles searched to establish his reputation. The present enquiry shall be, how far the general tenor of David's conduct, entitled him to that noble attribute. If he enjoys it justly, a scrutiny will be so far from sullyng his fame, that it will reflect a superior lustre after such an examination. If,

on the contrary, he does *not* enjoy it justly ; will sensible persons regret their being led to form a right judgment, where they only sat down with a dissatisfied acquiescence ? which is the situation of many a serious peruser of the Jewish history.

*Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good ;* is the language of the apostle Paul. The liberty thus granted is unlimited ; but it is more than a meer grant of liberty, it is a positive injunction : let no one then be so timid as to resign an inclination to satisfy just doubts : in Britain, thanks to the obstinate heresy of our brave forefathers, no audacious Romish priest can prescribe



## P R E F A C E. ix

scribe limits to the exercise of our reasoning faculties. An honest desire to obtain truth, will sanctify the most rigid scrutiny into every thing. An apostle has told us, that we are not to believe even an angel from Heaven, who should preach any other gospel than that of Christ\* : and, no authority can be so sacred, as to set aside the *only discerning faculty* with which our Creator has furnished us; or to give the lie to our most self-evident conceptions of right and wrong.

Let

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\* Galatians i. 8.

Let us then proceed without farther hesitation.

To form an idea of the rectitude of David's principles, we have no other means than to inspect his actions, which are the only credible manifestations of them. We need then but to examine his life as contained in the Old Testament, where we shall find facts incontestible, and therefore not liable to the charge of calumny; on which to found our opinion: in doing this, the author will not scruple to laugh where he must, at the same time that he will be candid every where.

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He is not unsensible of two formidable obstacles to this design.

I. The broken unconnected manner in which the Jewish history is transmitted down to us : which renders it impossible to give a compleat narrative of any period in it.

II. The partial representation of it, as being written by themselves.

In some measure to surmount these obstacles, the author assumes the liberty of giving *his* sense to what appears dark, or misrepresented ; which he hopes will not be denied him, so long

long as it is not found that a forced construction is put upon any thing cited : or, that it is represented in any other light than what it naturally appears in, when examined with the same freedom, which is used in reading Tacitus, Rollin, or Rapin ; and which we have a right to use toward all.

And lest it should be imagined that too great liberties are taken with the biblical writers ; it may not be amiss to mention once for all, that innumerable instances might be produced, to shew that the authority of *the Lord*, so continually quoted to sanctify every transaction related ; constituted for the  
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## P R E F A C E. xiii

most part, nothing more than national phrases, which obtained universally among so bigotted a people as on all occasions the Jews appear to have been : one twelfth part of whom were appropriated to the priesthood !

The author is not without apprehension that this undertaking may excite the indignation of many worthy persons against him, whose zeal may catch fire, at so free a disquisition on what they have always been taught to esteem a sacred character : this is what he is extreamly sorry for ; since it is with the utmost regret, that he would give the least offence to the  
well-

well-meaning part of mankind. But a blind reverence not having had influence over him, sufficient to make him read with his eyes shut, he has represented matters as they appeared to him : giving his vouchers for every fact, as he proceeded.

That the sense in which the acts of David are here understood, is the most obvious and natural, appears from the amazing pains it has occasioned his champions, to force another upon them. Of this the life of David, by Dr. Delany, is a most remarkable and recent instance ; but whose gross palliations, puerile conjectures, and mean shifts

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to which he has been driven, prove the difficulty of the task; while they are too frivolous to bias any, but the most *Catholic believers*.

Mr. Stackhouse, in his History of the Bible, has urged arguments against particular passages, under the title of *Objections*; so cogent, that *his answers* to, could not be satisfactory even to himself.

THE

PREFACE

in which he has been driven, prove  
the character of his tale; while they  
are not inconsistent in history, but the

most delicate fiction.

Mr. Mackintosh, in his History of  
the Bible, has urged arguments against  
propaganda passages, under the title of  
Cyprian; to contend that his system  
is sound, not so satisfactory even to

himself.

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE MAN  
AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

✱✱✱✱✱ HE first establishment of regal government among the Hebrews, was occasioned by the corrupt administration of Joel and Abiah, the two sons of Samuel ; whom he had deputed to judge Israel in the decline of his life \*. The people, exasperated at the oppression they laboured under, rose in a tumultuous manner, and applied to Samuel for redress ; testifying a desire to experience

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\* 1 Sam. viii. 3.

## 2 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

perience a different mode of government; by peremptorily demanding a King\*. At this, however, Samuel is greatly displeased: not that his sons had tyrannized over the people; for of this he takes no manner of notice; neither exculpating them, nor promising the people redress: his chagrin was owing to the violent assumption of the supreme magistracy out of the hands of his family; a circumstance, for which he expresses the bitterest resentment†. He consults the Lord; and, not knowing else how the insurrection might terminate, in his name yields to their desires; promising them a king, with vengeance to them. *For, says the Lord, they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them‡.* The people, notwithstanding, obstinately persisted in their demand, and departed not without a promise of compliance.

Samuel apparently chose the most impartial  
method

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\* 1 Sam. viii. 5.

† Ver. 6, &c.

‡ Ver. 7.

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART: 3

method of electing a king ; which was by lot, from among the people assembled by tribes ; but, prudently pitches upon his man, previous to the election ; as the whole tenor of his conduct manifests that he intended to give them a king, in name ; but to have one subordinate to his will. Opportunely for his purpose, Saul, a raw country lad, having rambled about to seek his father's asses, which had strayed ; and finding all search after them vain, applied to Samuel as a prophet \*, with a fee in his hand, to gain intelligence of his beasts.

We gather from several passages in Jewish history, that there were seminaries of prophets, i. e. the universities of the times ; where youth were trained up to the mystery of prophesying. We find there were false prophets, Non-conformists, not of the establishment ; we find that such could even impose upon true ones † : and we find moreover, by this instance, that prophets

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\* 1 Sam. ix. 7. 8. † 1 Kings xiii. 18. Josephus *in loco*,



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phets did not disdain to give assistance in their prophetical character, concerning domestic matters, for reasonable gratuities. A chief among the prophets, one who had been a judge over Israel, is applied to, for intelligence concerning lost cattle \*.

But,

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This subordinate part of the prophetic employment is thus commemorated by Butler in the person of Sydropbel, who according to him, dealt

————— in destiny's dark council,  
And sage opinions of the moon sells;  
To whom all people far and near,  
On deep importances repair.  
When brass or pewter hap to stray,  
Or linen sinks out of the way;  
When geese and pullen are seduc'd,  
And sows of sucking pigs are chous'd;  
When cattle feel indisposition,  
And need th' opinion of physician;  
When murrain reigns in hogs or sheep,  
And chickens languish of the pip.  
When yeast and outward means do fail,  
And have no pow'r to work on ale;  
When butter does refuse to come,  
And love proves cross and humour some :



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. §

But, to proceed, Saul not only found his asses, but a kingdom into the bargain; and had the spirit of the Lord given to him \*; which we find taken away † again, when he proved untractable; though it seems somewhat odd, that he should prove disobedient, while he acted under the influence of this divine Spirit!

After Samuel had in private † anointed Saul king, and told him his asses were already found, he dismissed him. He next assembled the people for the election of a king: at which assembly, behold, the lot fell on the tribe of Benjamin; and in that, on the family of Matri; and ultimately, on Saul the son of Kish §. An election somewhat resembling consistories for the  
election.

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*To him with questions and with wine,  
 They for discow'ry flock, or curing.*

A profession still subsisting, though of far greater repute formerly, while kept in few hands.

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\* 1 Sam. x. 6.      † Ch. xvi. 14.      † Ch. x. 1.  
 § Ver. 20. 21.

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election of bishops ; where the person being previously fixed upon, they pray solemnly to God, for a direction of their choice.

It is not intended here to give a detail of the reign of king Saul ; the notice hitherto taken of him being merely because the life of David could not be properly introduced without mentioning the cause of the alteration of government, and the manner in which monarchy was first established ; since Samuel's disappointment in Saul, naturally leads to his similar election of David.

The disobedience of Saul, in sparing one man, and some cattle, from a nation which Samuel in the name of the Lord commanded him utterly to extirpate \* ; irrecoverably lost him the Favour of this imperious Creator of Kings ; and in the end produced the miserable destruction not only of himself, but of all his family : which will occasion no surprize, when we

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\* 1 Sam. xv. 3.

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

we consider the absolute dominion and ascendancy which the Jewish clergy maintained over this superstitious people.

We are not to imagine that the sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, was the only cause of this rupture between him and Samuel. For we may gather from other parts of his history, that Saul was not over-well affected toward his patrons the Levites \*; whom he had too much spirit to continue under subjection to. This, however, was the occasion on which Samuel chose to declare himself †: he haughtily avowed an intention of deposing him ‡; and ordering Agag to be brought into his presence, he hewed him in pieces,—*before the Lord* §.

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\* 1 Sam. xii. 18, 19. xxviii. 9.

† Saul is recorded to have affronted Samuel once before, by daring to sacrifice without him, on a time when Samuel did not keep his appointment with him. See Ch. xiii. 8,—14.

‡ Ch. xv. 26, 28.

§ Ver. 33.

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We now come to the Hero of the History.

In pursuance of his intention to make another king, Samuel goes under the pretence of a sacrifice, and anoints another shepherd-boy\*; which was David the youngest son of Jesse, the Beth-lehemite; and gave him the spirit of the Lord, which he had just taken from poor Saul. The king in the mean time reflecting on the precariousness of his situation, now that the priests, in the person of Samuel, were exasperated against him; and well knowing their importance among his subjects, fell into a melancholy disorder of mind†, which his physicians were unable to remove‡.

This was made the occasion of bringing David to court. The king was advised to divert himself with music; and David was contrived

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\* Sam. xvi. 13.

† Ver. 14.

‡ Josephus.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 9

trived to be recommended to him for his skill on the harp \*. Saul accordingly sent to Jesse, to request his son; which was immediately complied with: and David was kept at court, in the capacity of the king's armour-bearer †.

Here the story begins to grow confused, beyond *lay-skill* to reconcile. A war with the Philistines is abruptly introduced; in the midst of the relation of which, we are as abruptly informed that David returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep ‡ again: from whence his father sent him with provisions for his brothers, who were in the army §. What can we think of this? Jesse hardly recalled his son from the honourable post of armour-bearer to the king! it is not likely that he was turned off, since we afterward find him playing on the harp to the king, as before ||; neither was it a proper employment for the king's armour-bearer.

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\* 1 Sam. xvi. 18.      † Ver. 21.      ‡ Ch. xvii. 15.  
 § Ver. 17.      || Ch. xviii. 10.

## 10 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

to be feeding sheep, when the army was in the field and his majesty with them in person ! Why—the most easy method, is to take it as we find it; to suppose it to be right, and go quietly on with the story,

In the Philistine army was a man of extraordinary size, named Goliath; who came out of their camp, day by day, challenging and defying any one among the Hebrews to single combat, and to rest the decision of their quarrel upon the event of the battle between them: an offer, which no one among the Israelites was hitherto found hardy enough to accept\*. David arrived at the army just as it was forming for engagement; at which time the Giant advanced as before, with reproachful menaces: and after having enquired carefully concerning what reward would be given to the conqueror of this giant, and finding that great riches and the king's daughter would be the prize of conquest;

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\* 1 Sam. xvii. 4, &c.

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART: 11

quest; David courageously declared before Saul, his acceptance of the challenge \*, notwithstanding the contempt with which his offer was treated.

Saul, relying on the youth's ardour, and assurance of victory; girded his own armour on him †: but David put it off again, trusting entirely to a pouch of stones, and his own skill in slinging ‡. The success answered his hopes, and stamped a rash undertaking with a more respectable name: he knocked Goliath down, with a stone; then ran in upon him, cut his head off with his own sword, and brought it triumphantly to the king of Israel §. The consequence was the defeat of the Philistines.

Here we meet with another stumbling block. For, though Saul, as we have already observed, had sent to Jesse expressly for his son David; though

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\* 1 Sam. xvii. 32. † Ver. 38. ‡ Ver. 40.  
§ Ver. 49.

## 12 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

though David had played to him on the harp; though Saul had again sent to Jesse, to desire that David might be permitted to stay with him; and in consequence of this, had created him his armour-bearer; though he had now a fresh conference with him; had just put his own suit of armour on him; though all these occurrences must have happened within a small space of time, yet, his memory is made so to fail him on a sudden, that he knew nothing of David, or his parentage! but while David went to meet the Giant, he enquired of others who proved as ignorant as himself, whose son \* the stripling was? This stumbling block we must likewise step over, for it is not to be removed.

The reputation which this gallant action procured to David, soon gained him advancement in the army, and a warm friendship with Saul's son Jonathan †. But the inordinate acclamations of the people, on account of the death of  
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\* 1 Sam. xvii. 55.

† Ch. xviii. 3.



the Philistine Giant, *Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands* \*, a rhodomontade out of measure extravagant, when we compare the two subjects of the contrast; justly occasioned Saul to view David with a jealous eye. We have all the reason in the world to believe that Samuel and the priests made every possible advantage of an adventure so fortunate for their secondary king, to improve his growing popularity; which even at its outset had so far exceeded all bounds of decency: *What, said Saul, can he have more but the kingdom* †? and we may therefore conclude that the king saw enough to alarm him; for we are told, that *Saul eyed David from that day and forward* ‡. Thus we find that on the day following, while David played as usual on his harp before Saul, the king cast a javelin at him §: which David avoided. Saul then made him captain over a thousand; saying, *let not mine hand be upon him,*  
but

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\* 1 Sam. xviii. 7.      † Ver. 8.      ‡ Ver. 9.  
§ Ver. 11.

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*but let the hand of the Philistines be upon* \* *him*: He likewise made him the offer of his daughter Merab for his wife; but she, we know not why, was given to another †; afterward Michal: and David's modesty ‡ on this occasion, was incomparably well acted; he knowing himself at the same time, to be secretly intended for the kingdom, by Samuel.

Saul, upon reflexion, concluding it dangerous to execute any open act of violence against this young hero, politically hoped to ensnare him, by exalting him high in his favour; or to get rid of him by putting him upon his mettle, in performing feats of valour: for a deficiency of courage is not to be numbered among David's faults. It was with this view that the king, yet required of him, an hundred Philistine foreskins §, as the condition of becoming his son-in-law.

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\* 1 Sam. xviii. 17. † Ver. 19. ‡ Ver. 23.  
§ Ver. 25. According to Josephus, 600-heads.

Had presents of value been required, a man of ability and generosity might with a very good grace have overpaid the demand; but where the lives of men, even though enemies, are concerned, a person actuated by the feelings of humanity, would have adhered but to the exact number required. David however, in this instance, gave the first proof of his delight in blood; by producing double the number asked, *in full tale*\*! It argues nothing to plead the different manners of mankind, in those early and less civilized ages of the world: for, if he was *then* the man after God's own heart; God is *unalterable*; and always required that we should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him.

David still advanced in his military † reputation; and met with a powerful advocate in the person of Jonathan, his brother-in-law and faithful

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\* 1 Sam. xviii. 27. † Ver. 30. Ch. xix. 9.



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ful friend ; who affected a temporary reconciliation between him and Saul \* : at which time Saul swore he would no more attempt his life. Nevertheless, whether it was that he could not get the better of his jealousy ; or whether it was that he still discovered David intriguing with the priests, we know not ; consequences incline us to the last conjecture : Saul made two more attempts to kill him † ; from one of which he was protected by his wife Michal ; and finding it not safe to stay at court, he fled to Samuel in Ramah ‡. Hither Saul sent messengers to apprehend him § ; but these it seems, seeing Samuel presiding over a company of prophets and prophesying, were seized with the spirit of prophesying also : and not only so, but it is related that Saul finding this, went at last himself, to just the same purpose ; for he likewise prophesied || stripping himself naked, in which condition he continued for a day and a night.

This

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\* 1 Sam. xix. 4.      † Ver. 10. 11.      ‡ Ver. 18.  
§ Ver. 20.      || Ver. 23.



This is an extream odd relation ! Had not the historian added the particulars concerning Saul ; it might with great plausibility be supposed that David and the prophets had corrupted and bought off these emissaries which were sent after him : but when the king is said to have prophesied ; and his prophesying to have been attended with such extravagant circumstances, as stripping himself, and lying in that condition for a day and a night ! we in this case have no other mode of conception, but the supposition that the prophets knew how to inspire these bigotted people with occasional fits of enthusiastic frenzy ! such fits, and such only, being able to influence extravagancies of this nature. Profane history, both antient and modern, will suggest instances which will render this supposition probable. Had the subject of Saul's prophesying been transmitted down to us, it might have greatly illustrated this passage in the history ; but no, he is barely said to have *prophesied* ; which is a vague term, signi-  
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ying sometimes a prediction of future events, and other times merely a delivery of pious orations, otherwise understood by the word *preaching*. But the spirit of God is alledged on all these occasions; this is said to have been upon Saul; and this is sufficient to stop all impertinent inquisitive folks: thus, after *multum agendo, nihil agens*, we leave it——just as we found it.

Afterward David had a private interview\* with Jonathan; for he durst not venture to appear at court. At this meeting, Jonathan, who had conceived too great an affection for this man, and was at length seduced by him from the duty and allegiance which he owed to his father and king, solemnly vowed† that he would sound his father's intentions on the next day, which being the festival of the new moon, David's attendance was expected at the king's table; and that he would warn him of any danger

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\* 1 Sam. xx. 1.

† Ver. 12.

ger intended him. David lay hid in a field until Jonathan brought him the required intelligence; and when the king asked after him, Jonathan, as had been before concerted, said that he had requested leave to go and perform a family sacrifice at Beth-lehem. Saul's reply on this occasion is very pertinent, and shews that his antipathy to David was not the causeless inveteracy of a disordered mind. "*Thou Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom: wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.*"\* Jonathan expostulated with his father, and had a javelin hurled at him for his pains†.

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David

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\* 1 Sam. xx. 30. 31. Josephus *in loco*. † Ver. 33.

## 26 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

David being advertised, according to agreement, of the king's disposition regarding him, retired to Abimelech the high priest, at the city of Nob\*: who treated him with shew-bread, and armed him with the sword of Goliath; which had been hung up and consecrated to God †.

We may consider David's resuming this sword, after its dedication as a religious trophy, to be a manifestation of hostile intentions, or a declaration of war against Saul; for which he now took the first opportunity to prepare. Thus accoutred, he fled out of Judæa, to Achish, king of Gath ‡; intending, as we have good reason to believe, to enter into a treaty of alliance with him against the Hebrews; but the popular cry was against him before he accomplished any thing: or at least any thing that has reached our times. Here David appears to disadvantage: for though his carrying with him the sword of Goliath,

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\* 1-Sam. xxi. 5. † Ver. 9. Josephus.

‡ Ver. 10.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 21

Goliath, was artful enough ; since it was a continual witness of that prowess, which had gained him such extraordinary reputation : yet for him in this circumstance, to throw himself into the power of the Philistines, from whose champion he had ravished *that sword* ; was the highest imprudence : and we perceive he had like to have suffered for it ; had not he made use of a stratagem to procure his release, which he effected by acting the madman \*. Mankind seems to have been very easily imposed on in those days !

David thinking it now time to avow his design of disputing the crown with Saul, openly ; went to a cave called Adullam : which he appointed the place of rendezvous for his Partisans. Here we are told he collected together a company of debtors, vagrants, and disaffected persons ; to the number of four hundred ; and opened his rebellion by heading this parcel of

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\* 1 Sam. xxi. 13.

## 22 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

banditti \*. Hither also came to him his father and all his brethren : and the first movement that he made, was to go to the king of Moab, to desire a retreat for his father and mother, until he knew the event of his enterprize †.

By the advice of the prophet Gad, David next marched into the land of Judah ‡ : Gad, no doubt hoped that as the young adventurer was of that tribe, he would there meet with considerable reinforcement. When Saul heard of this insurrection, he pathetically laments his misfortune to those about him ; that they, and even his son Jonathan, should conspire against him §. Then started up one Doeg, an Edomite, who informed Saul, that he had seen David harboured by the priests in Nob ||. Upon this, Saul summoned all those belonging to that city, before him, with Abimelech their chief ; who began to excuse himself as well as he could :  
but

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\* 1 Sam. xxii. 2.      † Ver. 3.      ‡ Ver. 5.  
§ Ver. 7. 8.,      || Ver. 9.

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 23

but Saul remembering, without doubt, the threatening of Samuel, concerning the affair of king Agag \* ; and considering these priests as the traitors whom he sought, he commanded them all to be slain, to the number of eighty-five persons †. Moreover, agreeable to the barbarity of that people, the massacre included the whole city of Nob, man and beast, young and old, without exception †.

Though the king's rage in this instance exceeded not only the bounds of humanity, but also of good policy ; it nevertheless serves to shew how deeply the priests were concerned in the rebellion of David ; and shews also that Saul had not so great an opinion of their holiness, as we at this distance of time, are, by their own annals, instructed to have. Had Saul been more implicit ; he might have enjoyed the name of king, have continued the dupe of the

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priests,

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\* 1 Sam. xv.

† Ch. xxii. 16. 17. 18.

‡ Ver. 19.

## 24 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

priests, have died in peace; and his children have succeeded quietly to the same inheritance after him. But,

*Ye Gods! what havock does ambition make  
Among your works!—*

During this time David rescued the city of Keilah from the Philistines \*, who were besieging it, hoping to make it a garrison for himself. But upon the approach of Saul, not thinking himself able to maintain it, being as yet but six hundred strong; and not chusing to confide in the inhabitants; he abandoned it, and retired to the wilderness †. Hither Jonathan came privately to see him, and piously engages in the cause against his own father, by covenant; in which it was agreed, that if David succeeded, of which Jonathan is very confident, he was to be a partaker ‡ of his good fortune :

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\* 1 Sam. xxiii. 3. † Ver. 13.

‡ Ver. 16. 17. 18.



fortune: but as Jonathan was not to join him openly, he went home again.

Saul having received intelligence of David's retreats, pursued him from place to place; but was called off by news of an invasion of the land by the Philistines\*; whether of David's procuring or not, we are uncertain. After repelling the invaders, he however returned to the wilderness of En-gedi, in pursuit of David; with three thousand chosen men. Here we are told of an odd adventure which put the life of Saul strangely into the power of David. He turned in to repose himself† alone, in a cave,

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\* 1 Sam. xxiii. 27.

† The words are, *to cover his feet*: which Josephus and others, understand to mean that he retired into the cave, to ease nature. But in Judges iii. 24. we find that expression to imply that the servants of Eglon king of Moab, supposed their master to have locked himself in, to repose himself with sleep, in his summer-chamber. This is farther corroborated by Ruth iii. 7. where, when Boaz had eaten his supper,

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cave, wherein at that very time David and his myrmidons were secreted \*. This one would imagine to have been a fine opportunity for him to have given a finishing stroke to his fortune, by killing Saul, and jumping into the throne at once. But David knew better what he was about, than to act so rashly. He could entertain no hopes that the Jews would receive for their king, a man who should imbrue his hands in the blood of the Lord's anointed. He therefore only privately

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supper, he lay down on a heap of corn, doubtless to take his rest. Ruth, by her mother's instruction, went, *uncovered his feet*, and lay down by him; to have some refreshment likewise. For in the middle of the night when the man waked, surprized at having an unexpected bed-fellow, and demanded who she was: the kind wench replied, *I am Ruth, thine hand-maid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine hand-maid, for thou art a near kinsman.*

In the present instance, it is evident Saul slept in the cave; as he discovered not the operation that had been performed on his robe, till David called after him to tell him.

\* 1 Sam. xxiv. 3,

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 27

vately cut off the skirt of Saul's robe\* ; and suffered him to depart in peace. When the king was gone out from the cave, David calls after him, and artfully makes a merit of his forbearance, protesting an innocency, to which his being in arms was, however, a flat † contradiction. Saul freely and gratefully acknowledges himself indebted to him for his life, and seems so well convinced of David's strength, and his own weakness, that he candidly confesses it ; only tying him down by an oath ‡, not to destroy his children after him. An obligation which, in due time, we shall see how well remembered and fulfilled by David.

Saul must certainly have strayed very far from his men, to have let David catch him at so great a disadvantage : a conduct not usual with good generals. That such must have been the case, is however, evident, while we credit the relation ; since the meanness of Saul's reply to David's

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\* † Sam, xxiv, 4. † Ver. 8.—15. ‡ Ver. 21.

## 28 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

David's harangue, can be no otherwise accounted for. Saul does not appear to have wanted resolution on other occasions; but to acknowledge his assurance that David would obtain the sovereignty; and poorly to entreat a fugitive rebel in behalf of his family! is a conduct not even to be palliated, but upon the foregoing supposition. We must either condemn the general or the king: neither of which characters appear with extraordinary lustre upon this occasion. David on the other hand dissembles admirably here; pretending to Saul, a great reverence for the Lord's anointed; though conscious at the same time that *he was also* the Lord's anointed; and anointed purposely to supersede the other Lord's anointed: and moreover, was at this very time aiming to put his election in force! But—as the people were not of his council; and he knew their great regard for religious sanctions, it was certainly prudent in him, to set an example of piety, in an instance, of which he hoped, in time, to reap the



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 29

the benefit himself. About this time Samuel died.\*.

We next find our young adventurer acting the chief character in a tragi-comedy, which will farther display his title to the appellation of being the man after God's own heart.

There dwelt then at Maon, a blunt rich old farmer, whose name was Nabal. David hearing of him, and that he was at that time sheep-shearing; sent ten of his followers to levy a contribution upon him †: making a merit of his forbearance in that he had not stole his sheep, and murdered his shepherds ‡. Nabal, who, to be sure, was not the most courteous man in the world; upon receiving this extraordinary message, gave them but a so-so answer, attended with a flat denial. *Who, says he, is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I*  
*then*

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\* 1 Sam. xxv, 1.

† Ver. 5—9.

‡ Ver. 7—

### 30 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

*then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? \**

Upon receiving this answer, David directly formed his resolution; and arming himself with a number of his followers, vowed to butcher him and all that belonged to him, before the next morning †. And how was this pious intention diverted? Why, Abigail, the charming Abigail, Nabal's wife, resolved, unknown to her spouse, to try the force of beauty in mollifying our angry hero: whose disposition for gallantry and warm regard for the fair sex, was, probably, not unknown at that time. Accordingly, she prepares a present, and goes to David, saying very sententially—*upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be: ‡*—judging very humanely, that could she get him to transfer his revenge upon *her*, she might possibly contrive to pacify him, without proceeding to disagreeable extremities. Nor was she wrong in her judgment;

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\* 1 Sam. xxv. 16. 11. † Ver. 13. 34. ‡ Ver. 24.

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 31

ment; for we are told — *So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, go up in peace to thine house; see I have hearkened to thy voice, AND HAVE ACCEPTED THY PERSON* \*. But whatever pleasure Abigail might have had, we do not find that Nabal was so well pleased with the composition his wife had made for him; for when he came to understand so much of the story as she chose to inform him of; he guessed the remainder, broke his heart, and died in ten days afterward †: David loses no time, but returns God thanks for the old fellow's death, and then marries the buxom widow ‡; together with one Ahinoam, a Jezreelite. For Saul had disposed of his daughter Michal to another §.

We are now told another story extreamly resembling that of the cave at En-gedi. Saul again pursues David with three thousand chosen men;

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\* 1 Sam. xxv. 35.

† Ver. 37. 38.

‡ Ver. 39.

§ Ver. 44.

## 32 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

men; again fell into his hands during his sleep, only that here David stole upon him in his own camp; he ran away with the king's spear and bottle of water; and Saul went back again as wise as he came \*.

I own that I subscribe to the opinion of Mons. Bayle, who looks upon this but as another detail of the adventure at En-gedi: and that, for much the same reasons. For, upon a comparison of both, as laid down in the 23d, 24th, and 26th chapters of 1 Samuel, we may remark.

I. That in each story, the Ziphites give Saul intelligence, of the place where David harboured.

II. That in each story, David comes upon Saul in much the same manner, with-holds his people from killing him, and contents himself

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\* 1 Sam. xxvi.



self with taking away a testimonial of the king's having been in his power.

III. That in the second account, when David is pleading the injustice of Saul's persecuting him, as he terms it; he does not represent to him that this was the *second time* of his sparing him, when he had his life so entirely in his power! and that Saul's pursuing him this second time, was a flagrant instance of ingratitude after what had happened on the former occasion.

IV. That in the second relation, Saul, when he acknowledges David's forbearance and mercy to him in the present instance, makes no mention of any *former obligation* of this kind; although it was so recent.

V. That the historian, who evidently intends to blacken the character of Saul, and whiten that of David; does not make the least observation himself, in the second narrative, of reference to the first.

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## 34 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

These reasons prove unanswerably that we are furnished with two relations of the same adventure. To account for this double record, and their variations, must be left to commentators, connectors, and harmonizers, who are used to compromise affairs of this nature.

David finding, that with his present strength, he was not able to maintain any footing in Judea; puts himself once more under the protection of Achish, king of Gath\*. Achish, who does not appear to have been a very powerful prince, seems to consider David alone, and David at the head of six hundred desperadoes, as two very different persons: for he now assigns him a place named Ziklag, for a habitation; where he remained a year and four months†.

As he had now a quiet residence, a person  
who

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\* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. 2. 3.

† Ver. 6. 7.

who entertains a great opinion of David's sanctity, would be apt to suppose he would now confine himself to agriculture, composing psalms, and singing them to his harp: but David found employment more suitable to his genius. I should be very sorry to be understood to insinuate, that he did not sing psalms, at leisure times; but his more important business was to lead his men out to plunder the adjacent country. We have the names of some nations as they are called, but which must have been small distinct communities, like the present camps of wandering Asiatics, among whom he extended his depredations: these are the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites \*. Of these people he made a total massacre, at those places where he made his inroads! *saying, lest they should tell of us, saying, so did David, and so will be his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines †.* After thus prudently endeavouring to secure his robberies from detection, he brings his booty

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home,

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\* 1 Sam. xxvii. 8. † Ver. 9. 11.

## 36 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

home, which consisted of *all*, which those miserable victims possessed \*. He made presents, of this, to his benefactor king Achish † ; who, demanding where he had made his incursion ? was answered, against the south of Judah, &c. ‡ intending by this falsity to insinuate to the king, his aversion to his own country-men, and attachment to him. *And Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him ; therefore he shall be my servant for ever §.*

The Philistines at this time collected their forces together to attack the Jews. To which purpose Achish summoned David ||, and met with chearful compliance ; *surely, says David, thou shalt know what thy servant can do ¶.* He accordingly marched his adherents, with the  
troops

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\* We doubt not but David composed a psalm upon this occasion.

† Josephus. ‡ 1 Sam. xxvii. 10. § Ver. 12.  
|| Ch. xxviii. 1. ¶ Ver. 2.



troops of king Achish : but when the princes of the Philistines saw a company of Hebrews in their army, they were much surprised, and questioned Achish concerning them. The account which Achish gave of them, did not satisfy the princes, who justly feared he might prove a dangerous auxiliary. *Make this fellow return,* said they, *that he may go again to the place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to the battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us : for wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master ? should it not be with the heads of these men ?* \* David was accordingly dismissed, very much mortified at their distrust of him †.

Upon his return to Ziklag, he found that, during his absence, the Amalekites had made reprisals upon him ; had burned Ziklag ; and had carried off all the women captives †. But in the relation, there is one remark well worth

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noting,

\* 1 Sam. xxix. 4.

† Ver. 8. 11.

‡ Ch. xxx. 1.

### 38 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

noting, which is, that *they slew not any, either great or small* \*—so much more moderation had these poor heathens in their just revenge, than the enlightned David in his unprovoked insult. Upon this misfortune, his band began to mutiny; and were upon the point of stoning † him; when he, who knew their weak side, enquired of the Lord what he should do? and evaded their rage, by inspiring them with a resolution to pursue the Amalekites, and with the hopes of recovering all their losses. He, therefore, with four hundred picked men, set out on the pursuit: by the way they found a stragler ‡ who had fainted; and, after recovering him, gained, by his means, intelligence of their rout. David came upon them unexpectedly, at a place where they were, without apprehension, making themselves merry upon their success: and though David's men recovered all they had lost, together with other booty; and found their wives and children unhurt; yet could not their captain

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\* 1 Sam. xxx. 2.

† Ver. 6.

‡ Ver. 11.

tain resist so inviting an opportunity of gratifying his cruel disposition : the pursuit and slaughter continued from the twilight (we know not whether of the morning or evening) of one day, until the evening of the next. None escaping but a party which rode upon camels\*.

Of the spoil taken from these people, David sent presents to the elders of his own tribe of Judah ; *and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt* †. By which means he kept them hearty in his interest.

The dispute between the Philistine and Jewish armies, did not terminate but by the defeat of the latter, the death of Saul, and of three of his sons ‡.

Such was the catastrophe of king Saul ! a man advanced from the humble state of a shepherd,

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\* 1 Sam. xxx. 17.      † Ver. 31.      ‡ Ch. xxxi.

## 40 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

by the prophet Samuel, to be his deputy in the government of the Jewish nation, under the specious name of king : a man, who, allowing for the *peculiar complexion* of the people over whom he was placed ; does not, on the whole, seem to suffer by comparison with any other king in the same history ; or whose character appears to be stained with any conspicuous fault, except that he was one degree less cruel than his haughty patron : and was disobedient enough to endeavour to be in effect, what he was only intended to be in name.

We shall now have an opportunity to observe the conduct of our hero in a regal capacity. The death of Saul facilitated his advancement to the sovereignty, to which he had no pretension, either by the right of inheritance ; which was claimed by Ish-bosheth, a remaining son of Saul ; nor by popular election, which Saul himself had the shew of : but by the clandestine appointment of an old Levite ; which inspired him with  
hopes;



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 41

hopes, of which, by arms and intrigue, he at length enjoyed the fruition.

David had returned to Ziklag but two days, when on the third, there came to him an Amalekite, who officiously informed him of the event of the battle between the Jews and Philistines, owning himself to be the person who killed Saul; hoping to be well rewarded for his news, by David; whose ambition was so well known, that he presented him with Saul's crown and bracelet\*. But alas, he knew not David, and perished in the experiment: David ordering him to be killed for daring to slay the Lord's anointed†. Who can help smiling at the relation of David's tearing the cloths off his back, and bursting out into a sorrowful lamentation for the death of a man, to whose destruction he had so freely offered to lend assistance but just before?

Upon this alteration of affairs, David asking  
council

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\* 2 Sam. i. 10.      † Ver. 15.

## 42 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

council of the Lord, was advised to leave Ziklag, and go to Hebron, one of the cities of Judah ; whither he and all his men repaired \*. There he got his Partisans to anoint him king over Judah † ; at the same time that Abner, Saul's general, had, at Mahanaim, made Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, king over all Israel ‡. Upon this division of the kingdom, a battle was fought at the pool of Gideon, on the part of Ish-bosheth, commanded by general Abner ; and on the part of David, by general Joab : victory declared in favour of David ; with small loss on either side, except that Joab lost his brother Asahel, who was killed by Abner's own hand §.

We must here be content with general hints ; being only informed that *there was a long war between the house of Saul, and the house of David :*  
but

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\* 2 Sam. ii. 1.

† Observe here that David does not seem to claim in right of the sacred unction bestowed on him long since by Samuel.

‡ 2 Sam. ii. 4. 8.

§ Ver. 17. 23.

*but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker* \*. What very much conduced to this, was an ill-timed quarrel between king Ish-bosheth and general Abner; concerning one of Saul's concubines, with whom Abner had been too familiar †: and his resentment of the notice taken of this, occasioned a treaty to be negotiated between him and David, whom Abner engaged to establish over all Israel ‡. David accepted his offer, but demanded as a preliminary, the restoration of his first wife Michal; who, during the disputes between him and Saul, had been espoused to another §. This demand he likewise made openly, by an express message to Ish-bosheth; who kindly complied with it: the poor man who had married her, following her weeping all the way ||.

One cannot help noting David's amorous disposition.

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\* 2 Sam. iii. 1.      † Ver. 7.      ‡ Ver. 12.  
§ Ver. 13.      || Ver. 15. 16.

## 44 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

position here : which could not be content with six wives, who bore him children \*, (no mention of those who did not) but was yet so warm, that even in his most important concerns, carnality must be a previous consideration !

After Abner had traiterously endeavoured to advance the interest of David † ; he had an interview with him ‡ ; which, quickly after he was departed, came to the ears of Joab ; who, unknown to David, sends for him back again, and privately stabs him, in revenge for the loss of his brother Asahel §. This was a base piece of treachery, worthy the servant of such a master ; to assassinate a man in cool blood, in revenge for an action committed in the heat of battle ; in self-defence ; and after fair warning given.

Upon the murder of Abner, David again  
acts

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\* 2 Sam. iii. 2, &c.

† Ver. 17.

‡ Ver. 20.

§ Ver. 27.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 45

acts the mourner \* ; which has a greater probability of being sincere now, than when he grieved for the unhappy Saul ; because the false Abner was preparing to do him essential service, by betraying his master's cause. But the event proved full as advantageous to David ; as will presently appear.

When Ish-bosheth and his friends heard of the fate of Abner, who had been the very life of their cause ; it dejected all their spirits : and two villains, named Rechab and Baanah, hoping to make their fortunes by the public calamity, went and murdered their master king Ish-bosheth, as he was reposing himself during the heat of the day : and brought his head to David †. But not reflecting on an obvious maxim in politics ; they, like the Amalekite before, who claimed the merit of killing Saul ; soon found that he thought it advisable to punish the

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\* 2 Sam. iii. 31, &c.

† Ch. iv. 5, &c.

## 46 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

the traitors, whatever he thought of the treason \*.

Had David possessed the least spark of genuine grace, he would have been ashamed to act the part he did, relating to the death of Ish-bosheth. He would have been ashamed to act the hypocrite so openly, in seeming sorry for an event, which removed the only formidable obstacle to his ambitious views. He would have been ashamed to punish the immediate instruments in perpetrating a crime, of which he, the usurper of part of the unfortunate king's dominions, and a pretender to the whole, was the remote, though efficient cause. Since had David aspired to no other sceptre than his shepherd's crook, and had not the villains presumed on the usurper's gratitude, Ish-bosheth, who was a quiet prince, might have reigned long an honour to himself and his country.

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\* 2 Sam. iii. 12.

Ish-bosheth does not appear to have been a man of parts, qualified to contend with such an antagonist as David: for nothing is recorded of him; Abner was the person who set him up; and had he lived, would as easily have set him down. And though no qualifications are a security against assassination, yet, as in the case of another unfortunate monarch, Darius, king of Persia; such cowardly wretches generally take the advantage of precipitating misfortunes already commenced, that they may pay their court to the rising sun.

The murder of this unhappy son of an unhappy father, advanced David to the dignity to which he aspired\*. (though we shall see in a passage which reflects no great honour to him, that Saul had more sons yet living) He was now in his thirty - eighth year; having reigned

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\* 2 Sam. v. 3    1 Chron. xi. 3.

## 48 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

reigned seven years and an half in Hebron \* over the tribe of Judah.

Although David obtained the government, yet could not his enterprizing genius continue satisfied with such an exaltation. The first object of his attention now, was the city of Jerusalem, then inhabited by the Jebusites ; (but it was of no importance whose property it was, if David conceived a desire for it) this city he besieged † ; and the inhabitants relying on the strength of their fortifications, out of derision planted cripples on their ramparts to guard their walls ; saying, *except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither ‡*. Nevertheless David carried the place, and made it his chief city §.

N. B. He took more wives and concubines out of Jerusalem, his new acquisition ||.

While

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\* 2 Sam. ii. 11. Ch. v. 5. † Ver. 6. ‡ Ch. v. 6. Josephus. § Ch. v. 7. 9. 1 Chron. xi. 5. 7.  
|| 2 Sam. v. 13.



While he was thus amorously engaged, the Philistines hearing that he was made king over all Israel, came and disturbed him: but David according to the usual term *smote them* \*; and his strokes were always sufficiently bloody.

I shall not dwell long upon the comic tale of David's bringing home the Ark, only that it was brought on a new cart drawn by oxen; and that Uzzah was *smote by the Lord*, as the historian asserts; for his impiety in saving the ark from being overturned †. On this account it was no longer trusted to prophane hands, but carried the remainder of the way upon the more holy shoulders of the Levites ‡, with great parade; attended by musicians, and by David himself, who, dressed in a linen ephod, *danced before the Lord with all his might* §: and this, in such a frantic

E                      indecent

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\* 2 Sam. v. 20. 25.    1 Chron. xiv. 11.

† 2 Sam. vi. 7.            ‡ 1 Chron. xv. 2. 15.

§ 2 Sam. vi. 14.

## 50 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

indecent manner, that he exposed his nakedness to the bye-standers. Wherefore his wife Michal sneered at him. *How GLORIOUS was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows SHAMELESSLY uncovereth himself\**. David, it seems, was of a different opinion, for he told her he *would* play before the Lord ; and would be yet *more vile* than she had represented him ; adding—*and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour †*. I would advise some staunch zealot to take this part of David's answer, for his text ; spiritualize it, and give the mystical sense of it : lest the prophane, who are content with the evident signification of words, should construe it no otherwise than into a compliment on the proportion of his parts : intimating that he had no cause to be ashamed of what he exposed.

This

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\* 2 Sam. vi. 20.

† Ver. 22.

This story is concluded with a remark, as striking as the rest of it.—*THEREFORE, Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death\**.

After this, David smote the Philistines, not sparing even Gath, that city which had so humanely protected him †. He then smote the Moabites, putting to the sword two thirds of the nation, by causing them to lie prostrate on the ground, and measuring them by lines; *even with two lines measured he to put to death; and with one full line to keep alive: ‡* so systematic was his wrath! Hadadezer, king of Zobah, was the next whom he smote; who, being assisted by the Syrians of Damascus, he next smote them §. Yet all this smiting and slaying, is so obscurely mentioned, that we know nothing of the offences committed against this mighty

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chief,

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\* 2 Sam. vi. 23.

† Ch. viii. 2.

‡ Ch. viii. 1. 1 Chron. xviii. 1.

§ Ver. 3. 5. 2 Chron. xviii. 3. 5.

## 52 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

chief, to excite such blood-thirsty indignation. Indeed, the cause is, without much difficulty, deducible from the produce of these wars, which sufficiently indicate the nature of David's *thirst*. Great quantities of gold, silver and brass, are said to have been brought to Jerusalem \*; and the priests may with reason be supposed to be the instigators to these wars; since we find all the plunder surrendered to them †. We have therefore no cause to wonder at the exalted praises they have bestowed upon him. He is said to have *gat him a name, when he returned from smiting the Syrians* ‡—this may very easily be credited; but it is to be feared that was the name he gat from the Jews, and that he gat from the Syrians, compared; they would not accord extreamly well together.

David was at this time seized with a *temporary*

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\* 2 Sam. viii. 7. 8. 10. 1 Chron. xviii. 2. 4. 6. 8. 10.

† 2 Sam. viii. 11. 1 Chron. xviii. 11.

‡ 2 Sam. viii. 13.



very fit of gratitude ; toward a lame son of his old friend Jonathan, named Mephibosheth : to whom he restored all the private patrimony of his grandfather Saul ; and took him into his family \*. But this was not lasting ; for upon an accusation preferred against him by his servant ; David readily bestowed all Mephibosheth's possessions upon that servant † ; yet——when the accusation was found to be false ; instead of equitably punishing the asperser of innocence, and re-instating Mephibosheth in his former favour ; he restored to him but half the forfeiture for his supposed guilt ‡ : leaving the villain Ziba in the quiet possession of the other half, as the reward of his treachery.

The next memorable act recorded of David, is the only acknowledged crime that he ever committed : all his other transactions being reputed *right in the eyes of the Lord* §.

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In

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\* 2 Sam. ix. 1, &c. † Ch. xvi. 4. ‡ Ch. xix. 29.  
§ 1 Kings xv. 5. compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

In the midst of an obscure detail of smiting and slaying; in revenge of the contemptuous treatment of some ambassadors, sent by him with compliments of condolance; but who were considered as spies: while Joab was with the army prosecuting the siege of Rabbah, a chief city of the Ammonites: David, then at Jerusalem, walking one evening on the roof of his palace, perceived, from that eminence, a handsome woman bathing herself\*. Fired with the sight, he sent to enquire who she was? and understanding she was Bath-sheba, wife to Uriah, who was at that time opportunely absent in the army under general Joab; he caused her to be brought to him directly, (no ceremony in the case) and after gratifying his inclination, sent her home again†. Some time after, the woman finding herself with child, naturally informed the king of it. He, never at a loss for ways and means, immediately ordered Uriah home‡; of

\* 2 Sam. xi. 2.

† Ver. 4.

‡ Ver. 6.

of whom he enquired news concerning the operations of the campaign: and then dismissed him to his own house; sending after him, a present of victuals \*. David intended the good man a little relaxation from the fatigues of war, that he might kiss his wife, and be cheated into a child more than he had a natural right to: but whether Uriah had received any intimation of the honour his majesty had done him; or whether he honestly meant the self-denial which he professed; we are not advertised: however, Uriah would not go home, but slept in the guard-room, with the king's servants †. David took care to be informed of this, and questioned Uriah concerning the reason of it. Uriah urged a scruple of conscience against going to enjoy any indulgence at home, while the ark, Joab, and the army, remained in tents in the open field ‡. He was detained another night; and David made him drunk, waiting to see what effect that might have. It was still the same;

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Uriah

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\* 2 Sam. xi. 8.    † Ver. 9.    ‡ Ver. 11.

## 56 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

Uriah would not go home. David finding him so untractable, altered his plan of operations, and determined then to get rid of him for ever. To which intent, he sent him back to the camp, with a letter to the general. *And he wrote in the letter, saying, set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die* \*. This was accordingly complied with †; and then Bath-sheba, like Abigail before, was taken into David's seraglio ‡.

Nathan, the prophet, read David an arch lecture upon this subject §; and he, who took care not to disagree with his best friends, bore with the reproof, and humbled himself accordingly.

It is hoped the supposition may be allowed, that the noise this righteous affair made, might be one motive for Joab's desiring David to come  
and

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\* 2 Sam. xi. 15. † Ver. 17. ‡ Ver. 27. § Ch. xii. 1.



and partake some of the honours of the campaign \*: an opportunity which he prudently laid hold of: but fatal was his presence wherever he appeared.

How shall a person subject to the sensations of humanity, (a security of more avail among men, than the most binding laws) how shall a man not steeled to a very Jew, find expressions suited to the occasion, when he relates the treatment of this poor city Rabbah? The study would be as difficult as unnecessary; the simple unexaggerated tale, if seriously attended to, will shock the humane reader sufficiently. The city of Rabbah was taken and plundered; and David brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: † and thus did he unto all the

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\* 2 Sam. xii. 27. 28.

† It is supposed that the antient slavery of the Jews to the Egyptians, and the labour they were employed in.

## 58 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

*the cities of the children of Ammon* \*. The precise punishments here alluded to, are not understood at this time; writers being much divided in their expositions of these words: but that extraordinary punishments are meant, cannot admit of a doubt; for Josephus writes that *the men were put to death by exquisite torments*. And is it *thus* the people of God, headed by a man peculiarly stiled the man after God's own heart, used prisoners of war? *Bella! horrida Bella!*

It would not be easy to select any period of any history more bloody; or abounding more in wickedness of various dyes, than that which is the object of the reader's present attention. Instances succeed so quick, that the relation of  
one

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in by their lordly task-masters, the making bricks; might be a current reproachful jeer upon the Jews, when any quarrel happen'd between them and their neighbours: and that the making their prisoners pass through the brick-kiln, was a cruel method of revenging such affronts. A conjecture not improbable.

\* 2 Sam. xii. 31. 1 Chron. xx. 3.

one is scarcely concluded, but fresh ones obtrude upon notice.

Amnon, one of our hero's sons, ravished his sister Tamar, and then turned her out of doors \*. Absalom, her brother by the same mother, seemingly took no notice of it, until *two years after*; when he invited all his brothers to a feast at his sheep-shearing; where he made Amnon drunk, and murdered him †: so deliberate, and yet so determinate was his revenge! Absalom, on this account, fled out of Judea, for three years ‡; until, at the intreaty of Joab, he was invited home again, by his father, whose favorite he was §. But though he returned to Jerusalem, yet would not his father see him for two years || more.

Absalom, during his exile, conceived a design of deposing his father; for after their re-  
con-

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\* 2 Sam. xiii. 14. † Ver. 28. ‡ Ver. 38.

§ Ch. xiv. 21. 24. || Ver. 28.

## 60 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

conciliation, his first attention was to render himself popular. To this end he set up a splendid equipage\* : but politically encreased his affability with his magnificence : rising up early, and planting himself in the way, to salute all who came to his father's levee. Of these he kindly enquired their business, or grievances ; throwing out hints of the king's remissness in the execution of justice ; and how uprightly *he* would conduct himself, were their causes to be determined by *him* †. Piety is universally, and was in particular, among this people, the safest disguise for roguery to assume. When Absalom, therefore, thought his scheme sufficiently ripe for execution, he desired leave of his father to go to Hebron, to perform a vow made by him while a refugee in Syria ‡. At Hebron he set up his standard, and his followers assembled in such numbers, and the disaffection was so general,

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\* 2 Sam. xv. 1.

† Ver. 2. 4.

‡ Ver. 7.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 61

general, that David thought it prudent to retire from Jerusalem\*.

With him he took all his family and dependents, except ten concubines, whom he left in his palace to keep house †. The priests, with the ark, would also have gone with him; but he caused them to remain in the city, as spies; to send him intelligence how matters went ‡. Ahitophel, his prime minister, joined the malecontents §; to balance which misfortune, David prevailed on Hushai, a trusty man of some importance, to remain in the city, to ingratiate himself with Absalom; counterwork the counsels of Ahitophel, and transmit intelligence to him from time to time, through the conveyance of the priests Zadok and Abiathar; whose sons were to carry on the correspondence ||. Having concerted matters thus, he evacuated Jerusalem; and Absalom entered ¶ it.

When

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\* 2 Sam. xv. 12. 14.    † Ver. 16.    ‡ Ver. 27. 28.  
§ Ver. 12. 31.    || Ver. 32, &c.    ¶ Ver. 37.

## 62 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

When David was upon his journey from the city, he was overtaken by Ziba, servant to Mephibosheth, with asses and provisions for his majesty's accommodation in his retreat\*: of whom, when David enquired why Mephibosheth did not come with him; this treacherous servant told him that he staid behind, hoping to obtain the kingdom of his grandfather, during this disturbance†: by which lie, he gained a grant of all his master's possessions.

Here an opportunity may be taken to introduce a circumstance, which is so far material, as it serves to shew, that the sanctity of David was not quite so universally assented to, as may be imagined, while he was living; and his actions not only fresh in memory, but more perfectly known, than was prudent to transmit to these distant ages.

As

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\* 2 Sam. xvi. 1.

† Ver. 3.

As David prosecuted his flight, he was met by a man of Saul's family, whose name was Shimei. This man as he came on, kept muttering curses between his teeth, and at length cast stones at the king and his attendants, calling out to him, *Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man* \*. This is pathetic, and truly characteristic of the tyrant to whom the speech was addressed. Some of his retinue were at the point of silencing this brawler with the *ultima ratio regum* †; but David prevented it ‡, wisely considering this was not a season for proceeding to extremities.

Absalom, in the mean time, being come to Jerusalem;

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\* 2 Sam. xvi. 7. 8.

† The motto on French cannon.

‡ Ver. 9. 10.

## 64 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

falem; like a buck of Spirit, took the damsels which his father had left to keep house, and incestuously cuckolded the old man by way of bravado, on the top of it \*; in a tent erected for that purpose!

Ahitophel was for selecting twelve thousand men, and pursuing David, directly, before he had time to recover his surprize †; which was certainly the most politic resolution that could have been formed. But Hushai, as was concerted, proposed a different plan of operations: opposing to the former, the well-known valour and military skill of the old king; and the hazard of making him and his men desperate ‡. He advised a collection of all the troops in the kingdom; that success might be in a manner insured: and that Absalom should command them in person. By which means, he affirmed that they should overwhelm David and his party, wherever they

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\* 2 Sam. xvi. 21, 22. † Ch. xvii. 1. ‡ Ver. 8.



they found him \*. Thus ended the council of war; Hushai gained the ascendancy; and when he knew that his scheme was accepted, he gave immediate notice to the priests †: with instructions how David should conduct himself ‡. David divided his forces into three bodies; commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: but by the prudent care of his men, was not permitted to hazard his person, by being present in action §. When he had reviewed his forces, he gave his generals especial charge to preserve the life of Absalom; and with a policy that reflects honour upon his military knowledge, expected the enemy in the wood of Ephraim ||: a situation the most judicious that could be chosen, for a small army ¶ to encounter one more numerous. David's men were tried veterans, among whom were the remains of those who served under,

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\* 2 Sam. xvii. 11, &c. † Ver. 15. ‡ Ver. 16.

§ Ch. xviii. 1. 2. 3. || Ver. 4. 5. 6.

¶ According to Josephus, David had but four thousand men.

## 66 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

and lived with him at Gath \*; whereas, Absalom's army must have consisted chiefly of fresh men. The battle was decided in favour of David †; with great slaughter of the rebel army: and as Absalom fled on a mule, his hair, which is celebrated for its beauty and quantity, entangled in the boughs of an oak, and he remained suspended in the air; while his mule ran away from between his legs ‡. He was observed in this condition by a man who went and told Joab: and he, who consulted the safety of David rather than his parental weakness in behalf of an unnatural son, killed Absalom with a dart §.

David grieved immoderately for this reprobate son, on whom he had misplaced a great affection ||: and though he had *acted* the mourner on several former occasions, this is the only one, in which his sincerity need not be questioned.

It

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\* 2 Sam. xv. 18.  
§ Ver. 14.

† Ch. xviii. 7. ‡ Ver. 9.  
|| Ver. 33. Ch. xix. 4.

It is true he might be really sorry at the murder of Abner ; but then the time must be attended to : Abner was killed prematurely ; he had not finished his treacherous negotiation ; David had much to hope from him ; but—when his expectations had been answered, it is far from being improbable, when we consider his treatment of the Amalekite, and of Rechab and Baanah ; that he would have found an opportunity himself to have got rid of a man, on whom he could have placed no reliance. But to return.

David was roused from his lamentations by the reproaches of his victorious General \*, who flushed with success, told him the truth, but perhaps told it too coarsely. It is evident that Joab now lost the favour of his master, which the murder of Abner, the killing Absalom in direct contradiction to David's express order, and lastly, his want of sympathy, and his in-

F 2

delicacy

## 68 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

delicacy in the present instance, were the undoubted causes.

After the battle, he invited Amasa, Absalom's General, to return to his duty ; very imprudently and unaccountably, promising him the chief command of his army in the stead of Joab \* ; seemingly but an unthankful return for the victory that officer had just gained him, and for his attachment to his interests all along. Amasa, it is true, was a near relation ; but Joab, according to Josephus, stood in the same degree of consanguinity ; they being both sons of David's sisters : this offer must therefore have been influenced by the personal qualities of the man ; the importance of gaining him over, he being a person of great power and authority ; and a resentment against Joab, for the death of Absalom.

The remains of Absalom's scattered army dispersed

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\* 2 Sam. xix. 13.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 69

perfed to their homes in the beft, and moft private manner they could \* : and David inadvertently plunged himfelf into frefh troubles, by fuffering himfelf to be conducted home by a deputation from the tribe of Judah †. This caufed difputes between that and the other tribes. They accused the tribe of Judah of ftealing their king from them ‡. Judah replied, that they gave their attendance, becaufe the king was of their tribe ; and that it was of their own free will § : the others rejoined that they had ten parts in the king, and that their advice fhould have been asked as to the bringing him back ||. At this juncture, one Sheba took advantage of this difcontent, *and blew a trumpet, and faid, we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the fon of Jeffe: every man to his tents, O Ifrael ¶*. The confequence of this, was a fecond infurrection. Amasa was commiffioned to fuppreff it: he accordingly afsembled an

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army,

\* 2 Sam. xix. 3.

† Ver. 15.

‡ Ver. 41.

§ Ver. 42.

|| Ver. 43.

¶ Ch. xx. 1.

## 70 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

army, and was joined by Joab and his men. But Joab, not thoroughly liking to serve under a man he had so lately vanquished; and having as few scruples of conscience as his old master had in the affair of Uriah's death, makes short work, stabs Amasa, and re-assumes the command of the whole army\*.

Being once again supreme in command, Joab applied him directly to the reduction of the male-content Sheba; who shut himself up in the city of Abel of Beth-maacha: he battered the walls, but by the negociation of a woman, the inhabitants agreed to throw Sheba's head to him over the wall, which they performed†: and thus was quiet once more restored. Joab returned to Jerusalem, where we are told that he was General over all the host of Israel‡. Not a syllable appears of any notice taken by David of the murder of the General by himself appointed:

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\* 2 Sam. xx. 7. 9.

† Ver. 15. 16, &c.

‡ Ver. 23.

pointed : and of the assassin's usurping the command of the army !

Not finding room in its proper place, it shall now be noticed, that when David was returning to Jerusalem from the defeat of Absalom's rebellion : with the men of Judah, who came to escort him, came also Shimei, the Benjamite \*, at the head of a party of his own tribe ; who had at a former meeting, so freely bestowed his maledictions on David when a fugitive, but who, upon this change of circumstances, reflecting on David's vindictive temper, came now to make his submission, and petition forgiveness. David accepted his acknowledgments, and confirmed his pardon with an oath †.

N. B. We shall have occasion to refer to this passage anon.

Mephibosheth came also to meet David, and

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\* 2 Sam. xix. 16.

† Ver. 23.

## 72 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

undeceive him with regard to the false Ziba's representation of him ; but he met with no other redress, than a remittance of *half the grant* made to Ziba of his estate \*.

These intestine troubles put David upon securing himself, as far as he could forecast, from any future disturbance.

It is the part of good politicians not only to form wise designs themselves, but also to make a proper advantage of every public occurrence ; that all things indiscriminately may, more or less, lead to the purpose wanted to be obtained. Of this we shall observe David to be mindful, in the ensuing transaction. Not that a panegyric upon David's cunning is by any means intended ; for certainly a more bare-faced deceit was never exhibited : such indeed as could only have been attempted among the poor bigotted Jews. It is sufficient, however, that it answered David's purpose ;

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\* 2 Sam. xix. 29.



purpose ; for more could not have been obtained from the most compleat trick that refined politics ever produced. But, view it in a moral light, and a blacker piece of ingratitude and perfidy can hardly be imagined.—It was impossible to continue the narrative without prefacing thus much.

David having with much trouble, from his competition with Ish-bosheth, established himself upon the Jewish throne ; and having in the latter part of his reign been vexed and driven to disagreeable extremities, by the rebellion of his own son Absalom ; and found the seditious humour of his subjects not easily disposed to subside, when once excited ; as was evident by the revolt headed by Sheba, after Absalom's party was crushed : these contemplations evidently called to remembrance, that some of Saul's family were yet living ; whom, lest they should hereafter prove thorns in his side, he concluded it expedient to cut off.

When-

Whenever David projected any scheme, a religious pretence, and the assistance of the priests, were never wanting. A famine befel Judea, probably occasioned by the preceding intestine commotions, which continued three years. *David enquired of the Lord: and the Lord answered, it is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites\**. But, where is this crime recorded? Samuel charged Saul with no such slaughter: he reproached him with a contrary fault, an act of *mercy!* which is assigned as the reason for deposing him. So that God did not remember this crime †, till many years after the man was dead! and then punishes—whom? a whole nation; with three years famine:

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\* 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

† If God sought vengeance for a particular act of cruelty, perpetrated by Saul; when was vengeance demanded for David's massacre of the *Geshurites*, the *Gezrites*, the *Amalekites*, the *Moabites*, the *Ammonites*, the *Jebusites*; and others, who at times became the objects of David's wrath?

famine : which, by the bye, was not sent as a punishment neither ; but merely as a hint of remembrance, which ended in hanging this guilty man's innocent children !

The oracular response dictated no act of expiation : but only mentioned the *cause* of the famine. So that the Gibeonites were applied \* to, for a knowledge of what recompence they demanded. (They had hitherto made no complaints.) They required no gifts, neither that for their sakes David should kill any man in Israel. (This qualifying expression seems artfully intended ; since they only required David to *deliver* the men *to them*, that *they* might kill them.) But that seven of Saul's sons should be surrendered to them, that they might hang them up, *unto the Lord* †. David, not withheld by any motives of gratitude toward the posterity of his unhappy father-in-law, in direct violation

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\* Sam. xxi. 2. 3.

† Ver. 6.

## 76 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

tion of his oath to Saul, at the cave of Engedi \*; granted the request he must himself have instigated †: sparing only Mephibosheth; who luckily was so unfortunate as to be a cripple, and so much a dependent on David, that he had no room for apprehension from him. He therefore reserved Mephibosheth, in memory of another oath, between him and his father Jonathan.

David's conscience was of convenient dimensions: he was under obligation by two oaths; he forgot one, and remembered the other. It was like that of Creon in Oedipus, who, being interrogated concerning his conscience, replied.

*—'Tis my slave, my drudge, my supple glove,  
My upper garment, to put on, throw off,  
As I think best: 'tis my obedient conscience.*

David now, thinking himself securely settled,  
was

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\* 1 Sam. xxiv. 21. 22.

† 2 Sam. xxi. 6.



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 77

was moved both by God \* and by Satan †, to cause his subjects to be numbered : which is, oddly enough, imputed as a great sin in him to require : for poor man he was but a passive instrument in the affair. Even David should have his due. The prophet Gad, by divine commission, called him to account for it : and as a punishment for *David's crime*, propounded to him for his choice, three kinds of plagues, one of which, *his subjects* thereby necessarily incurred. Seven years famine, three months persecution from enemies ; or three days pestilence ‡. David chose the latter.

It may be as well to wave this story, as to enter into any more particular consideration of it.

We have now attended David down to the decline of his life ; when his natural heat so far

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\* Sam. xxiv. 1. † 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

‡ 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. 1 Chron. xxi. 12.

## 78 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

far decayed, that no addition of cloathing \* could retain a proper degree of warmth. His physicians prescribed a young woman to cherish him in his bed, by imparting to him a share of juvenile heat †. This remedy may be very expedient in cases of extream age; but why beauty should be a necessary quality in the medicine, is difficult to conceive. They sought a *fair damsel*; and the damsel they found, was *very fair* ‡. Possibly David might himself direct the delicacy of the choice: but if his physicians intended it as a compliment to their master, it indicated a very insufficient knowledge of the animal œconomy; thus to stimulate the old man, and harraßs a carcass already sufficiently worn out: whereas, a virgin of homelier features, would have furnished an equal degree of warmth, at the same time that she would have been less liable to put wicked thoughts in her patient's head. However, the historian has taken care to inform us, that *the king knew her*

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\* 1 Kings i. 1.      † Ver. 2.      ‡ Ver. 3. 4.

*her not* \*; an assertion, which from the premises, there does not appear the least reason to controvert.

While the king lay in this debilitated extremity of life, he was destined to experience yet another mortification from his children. Adonijah, his eldest son, since the death of Absalom; taking advantage of his father's incapacity, like a fool assumed the title of king †, which, had he been a little less precipitate, would have soon have fallen to him, perhaps, without contest. He found means to allure Abiathar the priest over to his party, together with David's old general Joab: the latter, it is probable, being sufficiently prone to revolt, since the affront put upon him, by superseding him in favour of Amasa. Thus strengthened, it is possible he might have maintained his anticipated dignity; had he not, like Saul before, slighted his most powerful friends: he made an entertainment for,  
his

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\* 1 Kings i. 4.

† Ver. 5.

## 86 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

his party, to which he invited all his brothers, except Solomon \*. But, what ruined him, was his not inviting Nathan the prophet; it was there the grudge began: and the exclusion from this merry bout, caused the prophet's loyalty to exert itself †, which might probably have been suppressed by a due share of Adonijah's good cheer.

Let not the honest reader accuse the writer of putting a malicious construction upon every transaction he produces. Pray, reader, turn to your bible: in the tenth verse of the first chapter of the first book of Kings, you will find a remark that Nathan was not called to the feast. The very next verse begins, *WHEREFORE, Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, &c.*

Nathan and Bath-sheba concerted to tell David of this matter ‡; where the liquorish prophet could

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\* 1 Kings i. 9. 10.      † Ver. 11.      ‡ Ver. 13.



could not forget his loss of the banquet, but, it being foremost in his mind, he complains to the king of it, in an earnest manner ; *but me, even me thy servant—bath he not called \** ; which spoke the cause of his officious loyalty pretty plain. David here acknowledges a promise by which he waved the right of primo-geniture, in favour of Solomon, Bath-sheba's son †. He now directed him to be set upon a mule, proclaimed and anointed king of Israel ; by his appointment ‡. The acclamations of the people upon this raree shew, disturbed the opposite party at their table ; and this event, so unexpected, quite disconcerted them ; they all dispersed § ; and Adonijah ran to the temple, and took sanctuary at the altar. He obtained of Solomon a conditional promise of pardon || ; depending on his good behaviour ¶.

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And

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\* 1 Kings. i. 26. † Ver. 30. ‡ Ver. 33. 38.

§ Ver. 41. 49. 50. || Ver. 52.

¶ Solomon soon found a pretence ridiculous enough ; but sufficient in his eyes, to get rid of Adonijah : when his father was dead.

And now, methinks, some gentlewoman, of more than feminine patience, whose curiosity has prevailed with her to proceed thus far, may here exclaim. ‘ It must be granted, Sir ! that  
 ‘ David had his faults ; and who has not ? but  
 ‘ what does that prove ? only that he was a man.  
 ‘ If he was frail, his repentance was exemplary ;  
 ‘ as you may perceive, if you can prevail with  
 ‘ yourself to read some of his psalms. Indeed,  
 ‘ after your ill-treatment of the scripture, it  
 ‘ will avail little to tell you that you contradict  
 ‘ those inspired penmen, who expressly stile David  
 ‘ *the man after God’s own heart*. Nay, your writing  
 ‘ against him under that epithet, shews sufficiently  
 ‘ the rancour and impiety of *your heart* ; so that  
 ‘ I am fearful there are small hopes of reclaim-  
 ‘ ing you.’——Good madam ! hear me calmly,  
 and we shall part excellent friends yet. Had  
 David not been selected from the rest of man-  
 kind, why then—it is possible—hardly possible  
 —he might, pass in the gross, with the rest of  
 kings. But, when he is exalted and placed in a

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## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 83

conspicuous point of view, and represented as an eminent example of piety ! he then necessarily attracts our notice in an especial manner : and we are naturally led to wonder that a more happy subject of panegyric had not been chosen. If he was an holy psalmist ; if he is styled the man after God's own heart ; he also lived the life I have exhibited : and his capability of uniting these extreams, does but augment his guilt !

Yet, even in his psalms, he frequently breathes nothing but blood, and the most rancorous resentment against his enemies. Of these take a specimen or two, from the elegant *strings* out, of that transcendant pair of geniusses, Messieurs Thomas Sternhold, and John Hopkins ; in recommendation of whose version, and the taste of our countrymen, it may be truly affirmed, that their psalms have gone through more editions than the works of any other poet, or brace of poets whatever.

84 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

Psalms lxviii. 22. 23. 24.

*And he shall wound the head of all  
His enemies also,  
The hairy scalp of such as on  
In wickedness do go.*

*From Basan I will bring, said he,  
My people and my sheep,  
And all my own, as I have done,  
From dangers of the deep.*

*And make them dip their feet in blood  
Of those that hate my name;  
The tongues of dogs they shall be red  
With licking of the same.*

Again, in Psalm lxix. 24. 25. 26. 27.

*Lord, turn their table to a snare  
To take themselves therein,  
And when they think full well to fare,  
Then trap them in their gin:*

*And*



AFTER GOD's OWN HEART. 85

*And let their eyes be dark and blind,  
That they may nothing see;  
Bow down their backs, and let them find  
Themselves in thrall to be:*

*Pour out thy wrath as hot as fire,  
That it on them may fall,  
Let thy displeasure in thine ire  
Take hold upon them all.*

*As desarts dry their house disgrace,  
Their seed do thou expel,  
That none thereof possess their place,  
Nor in their tents once dwell.*

Nor was his wrath confined to Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Basan. For writing from the life, he in the last verse of the 137th psalm, thus addresses Mrs. Babylon, who has unfortunately continued to this day an object of hatred for every good protestant:

*Yea, happy shall that man be call'd,  
That takes thy little ones,  
And dasheth them in pieces small  
Against the very stones.*

## 86 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

A verse which is expressed with rather more pathos by another couple of ingenious versifiers, Tate and Brady; who thus chant in concert,

*Thrice blest, who with just rage possess,  
And deaf to all the parent's moans,  
Shall snatch thy infants from the breast,  
And dash their heads against the stones.*

Very pious ejaculations for whole congregations to sing to the praise and glory of God!

I do not task myself to reconcile such opposites; there are commentators who love these knotty affairs; to them they are left. You plead his exemplary repentance; is it any where to be found but in the psalms? *By their fruits ye shall know them.* If David was ever truly pious, we shall certainly perceive it, in his behaviour on his death-bed. *There,* it is to be hoped, we shall find him forgiving his enemies, and dying in charity with all mankind. This is what all mankind in general make a point of; from the faint

saint to the malefactor. David therefore must certainly give us an extraordinary instance of his attention to this important evidence of contrition. But what shall we think when we see this Nero of the Hebrews die in a manner uniform and consistent with the whole course of his life? What will be our reflections when we find him, with his last accents, delivering two murders in charge to his son Solomon? One of them to be executed on his old faithful general, Joab; who powerfully assisted him on all occasions, and who adhered to him in all his extremities; till at the last, when he had justifiable cause for chagrin: but who notwithstanding had not appeared against him in actual hostility. It will avail nothing to plead the private faults of the man; we are now to consider him as relative to David, in his public capacity. In which light we must loath the master, who died meditating black ingratitude, against so faithful, so useful a servant.

His other charge was against Shimei, who

## 88 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

reviled David at his retreat from Jerusalem, during Absalom's rebellion ; but who made his submission to David when he returned victorious : and whose pardon David had guarantied with a solemn oath \*.

Attend we now to the cause of these reflections.

After exhorting Solomon on his death-bed, to keep the statutes of the Lord ; David proceeds.

*Moreover thou knowest also what Joab, the son of Zeruiab, did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.*

*Do therefore according to thy wisdom, AND LET NOT HIS HOAR HEAD GO DOWN TO THE GRAVE IN PEACE †.*

This

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\* 2 Sam. xix. 23.

† 1 Kings ii. 5. 6.



This was afterward fulfilled in the basest manner, by the administrator to this pious testament.

David concludes thus.

*And behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Baburim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim : but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.*

*Now therefore hold him not guiltless : for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him ; BUT HIS HOAR HEAD BRING THOU DOWN TO THE GRAVE WITH BLOOD\*.*  
So saying, he expired !

This command was also executed in a manner, worthy the son of **Such A Father !**

To take a retrospect view of the foregoing narrative ;

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\* 1 Kings ii. 8. 9.

## 90 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

narrative; we may in few words see the sum total of the whole. A shepherd youth is chosen by a disgusted Levite, to be the instrument of his revenge upon an untractable king. To this end he is inspired with ambitious hopes, by a private inauguration; is introduced to court, in the capacity of a harper; and by knocking down a giant with a stone, whom, if he had missed once, he had four more chances of hitting; and from whom, at the last, he could have easily ran away; he was advanced to the dignity of son-in-law to the king. So sudden and unlooked for a promotion, within sight of the throne, stimulated expectations already awakened; and Saul soon found reasons to repent his alliance with him. Being obliged to retire from court, he assembled a gang of Ruffians, the outcasts of their country, and became captain over this company of Banditti. In this capacity he seduces his brother-in-law Jonathan, from his allegiance and filial duty; and covenants with him, that if he obtained the kingdom, he Jonathan, should be the next person in authority under

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 91

under him. He obtains a settlement in the dominions of a Philistine prince, where, instead of applying himself laudably to the arts of cultivation, he subsists by plundering and butchering the neighbouring nations. He offered his assistance to the Philistine armies, in the war against his own country, and father-in-law; and is much disgusted at their distrust of his sincerity. He however availed himself of the defeat and death of Saul, and made a push for the kingdom. Of this he gained only his own tribe of Judah: but strengthened by this usurpation, he contested the remainder with Saul's son, Ish-bosheth. Upon a quarrel between king Ish-bosheth, and his general Abner; the treacherous Abner entered into a treaty with David, engaged to desert his master, and establish him over the whole kingdom. This however the death of Abner circumvented: but the assassination of Ish-bosheth by two villains with intention to pay their court to the usurper, completed it at one stroke. He is now king of Israel. In which capacity he plundered and massacred all his

## 92 THE HISTORY OF THE MAN

his neighbours round him at discretion. He defiled the wife of one of his officers, while her husband was absent in the army : and finding she was with child by him, he, to prevent a discovery, added murder to adultery ; which being accomplished, he takes the widow directly into his well-stocked seraglio. He then repairs to the army, where, taking a city named Rabbah, he used the inhabitants with the most wanton inhumanity. A rebellion is raised against him by his son Absalom ; which he suppressed, and invited over the rebel-general, to whom he gave the supreme command of his army to the prejudice of the victorious Joab. After this he cut off the remainder of Saul's family, seven sons, in defiance to the solemn oath by which he engaged to spare that unhappy race : reserving only one cripple, from whom he could have no apprehensions : and who, being the son of Jonathan, gave him the opportunity of making a merit of his gratitude. When he lay on his death-bed, where all mankind resign their resentments and animosities, his latest breath



breath was employed in dictating two posthumous murders to his son Solomon ! and, as if one crime more was wanting to compleat the black catalogue ; he cloathed all his infamous actions with the most consummate hypocrisy : professing all along, the greatest regard for every appearance of virtue and holiness.

These, Christians ! are the outlines of the life of a *Jew*, whom you are not ashamed to continue extolling, as the man after God's own heart !

This, Britons, is the king to whom your late excellent monarch is compared !

What an impiety to the majesty of Heaven !

What an affront to the memory of an honest prince !

It is with great joy the writer of these memoirs takes his leave of a story, of which, by this time, he is sufficiently weary. He enter'd  
upon

upon it, however, from honest motives; and he concludes it with the consciousness of having performed a work, which he flatters himself will prove acceptable to all who entertain adequate notions of the eternal rectitude of the creator, whom they profess to adore. Those who estimate a man's religion by his implicitness, and think it their duty to stifle their living objections in compliance to the dead letter; (for objections they will have, and very strong ones too) such will undoubtedly be shocked at this publication. Such will produce numerous texts in opposition to what is here produced; and can inspired writings be inconsistent with themselves? It is not at present necessary to discuss that question. Argue that point among yourselves; the printer will at least profit by your disputes; though you may happen to

— *Explain a thing 'till all men doubt it,  
And write about it, Goddess, and about it:  
So spins the silk-worm small its slender store,  
And labours 'till it clouds itself all o'er.*

This

## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART. 95

This, yet, is none of my concern. The love of truth is a motive which ought to supersede every other consideration : for every other consideration is inferior, in comparison with it. Truth requires no tenderness in the investigation of it ; and scorns all subterfuges. It is, when displayed,

————— *divinely bright,*  
*One clear, unchang'd, and universal light.*

To rescue truth, therefore, from obscurity and disguise, is the most rational way of giving

*Glory to God in the highest ; and on earth peace :  
good will toward men.*

F I N I S.

Should any person imagine it worth his while to object to this Pamphlet in public; the author will not think himself sufficiently refuted, by having any particular inaccuracy or mistake, which inadvertency may have caused, insisted upon: a discovery or two of such a nature being frequently all the slender foundation on which many a pompous tower of assault is erected. He will not submit to any opponent who shall not clearly disprove the positions here undertaken to be established: namely, the turpitude of David's heart: and, of consequence, the total disagreement between his character, and that of our late worthy Sovereign.





